

**Board of Trustees**  
**Suffolk County Department of Parks,**  
**Recreation and Conservation**  
**Minutes of March 17, 2005 at Meadowedge, West Sayville**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Charles Bender      Member of the Board  
Ray Corwin      Member at Large  
John Fritz      Trustee, Town of Babylon  
Matthew Kruger      Vice Chairman, Town of Smithtown  
Alexander McKay      Chairman, Town of Huntington  
Gary Olsen      Trustee, Town of Brookhaven  
Richard F. White, Jr.      Trustee, Town of East Hampton  
Aurelio Colina      Trustee, Town of Southampton  
Christopher C. Drake      Trustee, Town of Shelter Island  
Thomas J. McCaffery      Trustee, Town of Southold

**ABSENT:**

Joseph Miller      Trustee, Town of Islip  
Vacancy      Trustee, Town of Riverhead  
Todd Stebbins      Member of the Board

**PARKS DEPARTMENT:**

Ronald F. Foley      Commissioner  
William Sickles      Sr. Superintendent  
Colleen Hofmeister      Contracts Manager  
Tom Hroncich      Intergovernmental Relations  
Coordinator  
Nick Gibbons      Sr. Environmental Analyst

**GUESTS:**

Pat Zielienski      Director of Real Estate  
Janet Longo      Assistant to Director of Real Estate  
Thomas Isles      Director of Planning  
Lauretta Fischer      Principal Planner  
Jennifer Kohn      Assistant County Attorney

## **PUBLIC PORTION:**

There were no persons present for the public portion of the meeting.

## **ADOPTION OF FEBRUARY 17, 2005 MINUTES:**

Chairman McKay made the following changes:

Page 2 – Under the title, Public Portion – 11th bullet asked to change, the word “crush” to “crushed” bluestone.

Page 5 – The title, Chairman’s Report, should be removed from this section, as it was the Deputy Commissioner who spoke on the Scully Estate.

Page 6 – The title, Chairman’s Report, should be inserted, as it was the Chairman who spoke on the Audit Report.

Trustee Colina motioned to approve the February 17, 2005 Minutes as amended. Vice Chairman Matthew Kruger seconded and motion was carried 10-0-0.

**Chairman McKay** went on to present the new Meeting Schedule for the 2005 Trustee meetings, which everyone had been sent, noting that some time changes had been made to eliminate any legislative time conflicts that had arisen. The new schedule was accepted.

## **Tom Isles, Planning Department**

Chairman McKay asked Mr. Isles if he had a report to present. Mr. Isles responded that there were no specific acquisitions today; we expect maybe some ready for April as they are in the pipeline right now. As a related item Tom Isles mentioned that there is a **new acquisition program, SOS**, (Save our Open Space) which went into effect on January 1st of this year. A component of that is a transfer of development rights aspect, which means that it is the first time in the County’s open space program that the legislature and subsequently the voters approved the option for the County to take development rights both in open space and passive park to use that for affordable workforce housing developments, subsequently to be approved by the legislature as well. The Planning Department was directed in this legislation to come up with the suggested program and has been doing so in conjunction with the County Attorney’s Office, the Health Department, and so forth and is in the process of introducing it to the legislature. This program has three components: (1) open space, (2) hamlet parks, and (3) farmland. The program uses a credit system. This process will be presented to the legislative committee on Monday. Tom agreed to provide the Commissioner with contents of the report next week so that the Commissioner would be aware of the program. While this program is not central to the Parks Trustees, it is a new twist.

It was asked if parcels in this program are those yet to be purchased. Tom responded in the affirmative adding that we are not going back, it is for parcels we will be acquiring in the future. It does not include Pine Barrens core parcels but other sites could generate credits. These three-year program twilight the end of 2007, which means that all funds must be appropriated and expended during that time. If it looks like an acquisition is going to happen, it would have to go through Planning approvals, Real Estate appraisal negotiations and then to Parks Trustees. Tom Isles noted that they don’t want to proceed with acquisitions until the TDR portion has been put to bed.

## **REAL ESTATE:**

Director Pat Zielienski and Janet Longo had no new acquisitions to report. Chairman McKay asked if anyone had any inquires for Real Estate. Bill Sickles said he received a call (initiated from Bob

Smith of Veterans Affairs) and subsequent visit from a gentleman inquiring about a piece of property, a war memorial known as **Cannon Park**, at the intersection of Route 25 and Route 454, which the gentleman said was being transferred from the State, possibly DOT, to Suffolk County/Suffolk County Parks. Bill asked if there was any validity to this. Pat Zielienski responded that she was not familiar with it. Discussion ensued and Mr. McKay asked that maybe we could get something official on this.

Mr. John Fritz said he had asked Lauretta a while ago about a farm on County Road 111 surrounded by State property and asked if there was any movement on that? Pat Zielienski answered yes, it is the **Brookhaven Trust**, that the McAllister family put it into. The property has been appraised and there have been offers made on it many times. The owners are located out of state. The parcel is located near the sole billboard there. Pat said the County would like to take advantage of this 50 acres purchase as it closes the gap for the County property there – vicinity of Hot Water Street and has an advantage of a lot of road frontage.

Board member Ray Corwin brought up the new **SOS program**. Tom Isles stated that it took effect this year and is a bonded program. Further discussion included Hamlet Parks with regard to the program. Vice Chairman Kruger asked if the credits were bankable or tradable? Tom stated they can be traded and are going to be held in a bank by the County and then will be made available by Legislative approval for affordable workforce housing. A private contractor could go to the Town and as long as he is in agreement to limit profits and to all other restrictions of the program, he could hypothetically be eligible for the program. The intent of the program, however, is not to sell the rights.

#### **COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:**

- Southaven Stables – RFP process resulted in none of the 3 bidders deemed to provide the desired financial strength and experience. As such, the Commissioner rejected all 3 proposals. The stables will close at the end of this month, however, trail riding is still available. DPW has estimated that building needs are in excess of \$650,000 to make it minimally useful. That would leave \$250,000 what DPW estimates for maintenance and upkeep. The County now has to review the situations and make a policy examination and decision. Colleen Hofmeister, Contracts Manager, stated there were 3 horse boarders left there. Board member Charlie Bender described timeline of events of downfall of stable facility over the last 10 years.
- Sears Bellows Stables – includes a barn and pasture area. Result of RFP was 2 proposals. One lacked a required bid security check. The other was received 4 hours later than the deadline. The Commissioner rejected both of these proposals. It will be re-advertised soon. Tom Isles asked about the possibility of the Old Field Farm property to maximize the County's holdings, as it has stables and paddocks on the property.
- ATV Task Force – met twice – Initially an organizational meeting followed by the first public hearing. The goal of the Task Force is to gather all the necessary information and submit a report to the Legislature by the end of the year. The next meeting is April 20th in Riverhead. All of the full Task Force meetings are open to the public and contain a public comment period.
- Golf Courses were scheduled to open March 11th – but bad weather kept them closed. Indian Island Golf Course will open 9 holes tomorrow with the remaining 9 opening on Saturday and Sunday. West Sayville is too wet to open but is progressing well with a drainage project. The condition of the Timber Point golf course is currently being reviewed by Superintendent Will Maxwell to open. Privately managed Bergen Point is opening 18 holes tomorrow.

- Smith Point Erosion – a wash over area was found recently. The dune has disappeared – a distance of approximately 100 yards. This area is 2 miles east of the campground toward the Moriches Inlet. Superintendent Sickles and Commissioner Foley, thanks to the Suffolk County Police Department's generosity, went for a helicopter ride on Friday 3/11, as it was hard to get out there by vehicle and that was when the wash over was discovered. The NYS DEC sent their permit officer out and they recognized the emergency nature of the situation and issued the County a permit quickly. Suffolk County DPW was there the next day with machinery and personnel. The permit allowed the County at a location, east of that over wash, to scrape a foot of sand off a healthy beach and move it to reconstruct the damaged dune and raise the elevation of the beach as much as practical. The target was to move 5,000 yards of sand. Probably will be 3,000 yards without violating the terms of the permit. Burma Road is 4 feet above the elevation of the beach. The dune height should be 12 feet higher than that. In the end, it will be 4 feet higher than the level of the road.

Commissioner Foley told the Trustees that while not everyone is in agreement with reconstructing the dunes, in that a new inlet might be a good thing, his justification is that if Burma Road is lost, all fishing opportunities will be lost except by boat, outer beach camping and outer beach day-tripping will be lost. These recreational assets would be lost if this area was allowed to breach. And a breach is the next step to occur if no intervention takes place. Also, March 25 will be the next full moon high tide. If a northeasterly storm takes place at the same time, you've got a double whammy in terms of potential severe erosion. Commissioner continued that, in his opinion, the County would have been negligent in not trying to preserve the barrier island. All work should be completed shortly with approximately \$25,000 being spent in this effort. In addition, beach grass plugs are being purchased from a nursery to be planted in this newly restored area and some sand fencing to be continued along this area. As shown in photos, a pedestrian stairway must still be dealt with and repaired as well.

- Raynor Beach County Park – DPW has engaged a substitute contractor for the defaulted one. They are working at a pace as the weather allows. It should be available for a Veterans Memorial Day function and completely opened by the summer.
- Smith Point East Booth – the camper check-in station on the east end of the park is now complete. Unfortunately, the result of another defaulted contractor. At Parks suggestion, the project is scheduled to be completed by Parks maintenance. The default process with the attorneys took some time and as such, work has not begun yet and it may not be ready in time for the season.
- Smith Point Fishing Pier – The 30 day review period previously mentioned, has not started yet. Construction should start in the fall.
- Events – Extreme Home Makeover – a house in St. James has been selected by the popular TV show to be remodeled for a widowed Suffolk County Police Officer and his 3 young sons. Parks gave them permission to use the parking area at Deepwells to park vehicles and stage equipment. In addition, they will conduct interviews with the family inside the Deepwells mansion. This will result in some exposure for the County parks system nationwide.
- Cash Handling Audit – Trustee Colina asked for an update on internal controls. Commissioner Foley said the department is progressing its best efforts in changing the practices that were highlighted in the audit. The biggest effort will come in the 2006 season when the reservation point of sale system is replaced. In addition, the Deputy Commissioner has been working diligently with the IT people and with

Cablevision on connectivity issues. Trustee Colina asked about the Indian Island golf course and if it would be in pristine condition as it was last Spring. He expressed much concerned that when he was there in September, the greens were in very bad condition. Commissioner answered that every effort is made to keep the greens in the best condition possible and with an excellent staff. Obstacles like heat stress and high humidity during both the day and night later in the summer can be very difficult to deal with. The County must obey the mandate that it is limited to in using and managing the golf courses using only organic pesticides unlike other golf courses that use non-organic chemicals. In addition, last summer, one of the wells failed at Indian Island and resulted in an irrigation problem there. It is hopeful that ongoing testing, using organic pesticides is being conducted now and in addition, Superintendent Will Maxwell is participating in the Compost Tea program to help combat problems and find solutions.

### **OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS:**

Further discussion included:

- Cupsogue Beach – vegetation removal project completed for Plover habitat.
- Vehicle Permit Stickers – Vice Chairman Kruger explained the problems/benefits of the New York State Empire Passport system. Bill Sickles reported that the Department of Motor Vehicles states that a sticker may only be on the side of the passenger at the right bottom corner of the windshield, which is not an effective location for control officers.
- Trustee Gary Olsen referred to a recent Newsday article regarding a study done by Cornell University and the impact of \$1.8 billion that the **boating industry** in New York State with a huge number of boaters in Suffolk County – approximately 80,000. The article discussed jobs, recreation, commercial marinas etc. He pointed it out to the Trustees today to consider other avenues for potential revenue and growth for the County and towns, and to serve the public needs. Commissioner Foley speculated on how the Smith Point marina has the potential to become something more than it is. Superintendent Sickles spoke of a proposal years ago for a marina to be developed at Goldsmith's Inlet.
- Trustee Chris Drake asked if the County had ever thought about the idea of one large central indoor/outdoor **Equestrian Center** rather than smaller ones. Superintendent Sickles remembered that at one time the Bohemia Equestrian Center was slated for a similar plan of this nature.
- Chairman McKay asked of the status of the **boathouse at Coindre Hall**. Commissioner Foley said there is some agreement with the town to find a mutually beneficial solution. Talks have not started yet.
- Trustee McCaffery asked about the **Piping Plover program** on County beaches and the steps that Parks takes to deter the birds prior to nesting in areas where the public could be using. Commissioner Foley stated that this it is not legal to deter the birds in any way and that the plovers take precedence over people.
- Trustee Colina asked Nick Gibbons about the **BNL clean up**. Nick spoke of the Paumanok Path – crews have placed pipe there that bypasses the water. The work is progressing and Parks staff is looking forward to when the re-planting and restoration is completed.
- Commissioner referred to page 3 of the **Audit report** in order to clarify information. Heading section – "Summary of significant audit findings" – it says that 9 out of the 10 parks practices that were going on during the audit left at risk some amount of money. It did not mean that 90 percent misappropriation was present. Parks is

changing the practices one by one in every park with heaviest effort being given to those with most incoming revenue potential. In addition the County Executive and the Legislature have increased the salaries of seasonal employees and thus will help the department get a better quality of personnel. Also, it would be beneficial to bump up the grade level of those personnel who do the cash handling so the department can demand more professionalism from them than in the past. Further discussion regarding staff – whether it be county staff or contracted staff – that supervision of staff remains very important in protecting cash transactions and the department must do everything it can to minimize the opportunities for the cash to be missing. Easy pass – good idea. Cash handling to be the same in all places.

**DATE AND LOCATION OF THE NEXT MEETING:**

The next meeting of the Parks Board of Trustees will be held Thursday, April 21 at Meadow Edge, West Sayville.

Trustee White recognized the hard work provided to the Board by Teri Kopp over the past several years. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Dorothy Rosado and Teri Kopp.